CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

ENDC/PV.408
6 May 1969
ENGLISH

FINAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 May 1969, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. I.F. PORTER (United Kingdom)

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PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Brazil:	Mr. S.A. FRAZAO
	Mr. C.A. de SOUZA e SILVA
	Mr. L.F. PALMEIRA LAMPREIA
	Mr. J. NOGUEIRA FILHO
Bulgaria:	Mr. K. CHRISTOV
	Mr. M. KARASSIMEONOV
	Mr. I. PEINIRDJIEV
Burma:	U CHIT MYAING
	U KYAW MIN
Canada:	Mr. G. IGNATIEFF
	Mr. A.G. CAMPBELL
	Mr. J.R. MORDEN
Czechoslovakia:	Mr. T. LAHODA
	Mr. V. VAJNAR
	Mr. V. SAFAR
	Mr. J. STRUCKA
Ethiopia:	Mr. A. ZELLEKE
India:	Mr. M.A. HUSAIN
	Mr. N. KRISHNAN
	Mr. K.P. JAIN
Italy:	Mr. F. LUCIOLI OTTIERI
	Mr. R. BORSARELLI
	Mr. U. PESTALOZZA
Mexico:	Mr. J. CASTANEDA
	Miss E. AGUIRRE
	Mr. H. CARDENAS RODRIGUEZ
	Mr. R. VALERO
Nigeria:	Alhaji SULE KOLO
	Mr. L.A. MALIKI

Poland:	Mr. H. JAROSZEK
	Mr. K. ZYBYLSKI
	Mr. H. STEPOSZ
	Mr. S. DABROWA
Romania:	Mr. N. ECOBESCO
	Mr. V. CONSTANTINESCO
	Mr. V. TARZIORU
	Mr. C. GEORGESCO
Sweden:	Mr. A. EDELSTAM
	Mr. I. VIRGIN
	Mr. R. BOMAN
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:	Mr. A.A. ROSHCHIN
	Mr. O.A. GRINEVSKY
	Mr. I.I. TCHEPROV
	Mr. N.S. KISHILOV
United Arab Republic:	Mr. H. KHALLAF
	Mr. O. SIRRY
	Mr. E.S. El REEDY
	Mr. Y. RIZK
United Kingdom:	Mr. I.F. PORTER
	Mr. W.N. HILLIER-FRY
United States of America:	Mr. A.S. FISHER
	Mr. C. GLEYSTEEN
	Mr. W. GIVAN
	Mr. T.S. WILKINSON
Special Representative of the Secretary-General:	Mr. D. PROTITCH
Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General:	Mr. W. EPSTEIN

1. The CHAIRMAN (United Kingdom): I declare open the 408th plenary meeting of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.

2. Members of the Committee will all be aware of the sad news of the sudden death on 3 May of the President of India, Dr. Zakir Husain, and equally aware, no doubt of President Zakir Husain's distinguished services to India and of the outstanding example he gave to the world in that regard. I am sure that I speak for all members of the Committee in saying that the Committee would wish to honour the memory of this distinguished statesman by observing one minute's silence and by requesting our colleague, Ambassador Husain, to convey to the Government of India and to the family of the deceased our deepest condolences and sympathy on the great loss to India and to the members of his family. May I therefore ask the members of the Committee to rise and observe one minute's silence.

The representatives, standing, observed one minute's silence.

3. Mr. HUSAIN (India): On behalf of my delegation I wish to express our deep appreciation for the sentiments of sympathy and condolence which all my colleagues here have extended to us on the passing away of our President, Dr. Zakir Husain. It is indeed a great and tragic loss for our country. I shall certainly convey the sentiments expressed here this morning to the Government of India and to the members of the family of the late President.

4. The CHAIRMAN (United Kingdom): Before I call upon the only speaker on my list this morning I should like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Castañeda, who is back with us.

5. U CHIT MYAING (Burma): In intervening at this stage of our deliberations, it would be quite superfluous for me to speak about the special importance of this year's session, the heavy tasks in hand, the need and urgency to make progress, the desirability of adopting appropriate working methods that would enable us to tackle our tasks with expedition and despatch, and so on. Representatives who have preceded me have ably and forcefully drawn the Committee's attention to those matters. I shall therefore proceed to offer my delegation's views on some of the items on our agenda (ENDC/236, p.3) to which we attach special significance.

6. I think it equally unnecessary to restate at any length the long-held view of my delegation that the problem of nuclear weapons and their carriers forms the heart of the whole armaments question, and that no appreciable progress towards our ultimate goal of

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general and complete disarmament will be possible unless we succeed in effectively controlling the nuclear arms race and putting it into reverse. With disarmament prospects seemingly in the balance at this particular juncture, this task has become doubly urgent. It is in the same context that the projected strategic arms talks between the Soviet Union and the United States have assumed an added significance. If, therefore, I devote the greater part of my statement today to problems in the nuclear field, it is because I sincerely believe that the prevailing circumstances require our Committee to concentrate more on this area than on what are sometimes called the marginal areas of disarmament.

7. Among the wide range of important measures in the field of nuclear disarmament requiring our Committee's urgent attention, the elaboration of an underground test ban treaty must, in our opinion, rank first in priority. My delegation has explained on previous occasions the reasons why we attach such overriding importance to that particular measure and I shall not tire the Committee by recapitulating them today. However, I feel I must stress one point. Since military underground nuclear testing has indeed come to denote the nuclear arms race itself, with the word "testing" signifying developing, improving, perfecting, refining, diversifying and, of course, quantitatively increasing nuclear weapon systems, I think it can fairly be said that a permanent stopping of such testing is required not only as a necessary first step towards the cessation of the nuclear arms race but also to underpin such agreements as may, we hope, emerge from the projected talks between the Soviet Union and the United States on the limitation and reduction of strategic arms. Consequently, achieving a comprehensive test ban -- which, I might mention in passing, has gone through far more exhaustive and searching negotiations that any other single measure related to nuclear disarmament -- has assumed greater significance an urgency than ever before.

8. My delegation is therefore much heartened to observe that the trend of discussion on this key question at our current session is becoming more concrete and purposeful. For this welcome development we are largely indebted to the Swedish delegation, and more particularly for its decisive and timely initiative in presenting to the Committee on 1 April 1969 a working paper (ENDC/242) with suggestions as to possible provisions of a treaty banning underground nuclear weapon tests. We consider that working paper to be a serious and constructive document containing well-pondered, practical ideas, and a document that has within it the seeds of an agreement on a comprehensive test ban. My delegation strongly hopes that, taking the Swedish draft as a basis, the

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deliberations in our Committee will before too long develop into full-fledged, forthright negotiations reminiscent of those which took place here in this Committee during the 1962-1963 period and which brought us very near indeed to achieving a comprehensive test ban treaty.

9. The statements of the United States and Soviet delegations made on 8 and 10 April respectively (ENDC/PV.401, paras 2-31 and ENDC/PV.402, paras 41-83) have again made it all too clear that verification remains the main area of disagreement between these two countries and that both are standing fast on their previously stated positions. The effect of this, to my mind, is to throw open the field once again for the further exploration and consideration of different possibilities and different approaches, including those already suggested, towards promoting a meeting of minds on this intractable problem.

10. I should like at this point to reaffirm my delegation's support for an organized international exchange of seismological data, a concept which owes its origin to a Swedish initiative and is now embodied in article II, paragraph 2 of the Swedish working paper. Whatever differing views may still exist regarding the adequacy or sufficiency of seismic detection and identification as the sole means of monitoring an underground test ban treaty, there can hardly be any disagreement that effective international co-operation in the exchange of seismological data will do much to ease the difficulty we are facing. It is therefore gratifying to note that the Soviet Union (ENDC/PV.402, para. 72) and the United Kingdom (ENDC/PV.404, para 13 et seq.) have indicated their readiness to take part in such an undertaking. We very much look forward to hearing the views of the United States delegation with regard to article II, paragraph 2 of the Swedish draft and hope that these will soon be forthcoming.

11. In this connexion I should like to express my delegation's appreciation of the valuable contributions which a number of delegations, notably those of Sweden, Canada and the United Kingdom, are continuing to make in this regard on the basis of the highly advanced seismological work being carried out in their own countries. This has helped us to understand better the various aspects of an effective international data exchange and given us a clearer idea as to how this might be organized. I trust that our Committee will continue to benefit from similar contributions from those and other delegations which are in a position to make them.

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12. As I stated earlier, the unchanged positions of the two principal nuclear Powers on the verification issue call for the exploration of different possibilities and different approaches in the hope of promoting or facilitating agreement. It is solely and strictly in that spirit that I shall now venture to offer a few preliminary thoughts on this problem.

13. As my delegation sees it -- and we stand to be corrected on this score -- the present disagreement derives not from any irreconcilable differences over fundamental or general principles but rather from an honest difference of opinion as to the practical requirements of an adequate or sufficient comprehensive test ban verification. Perhaps to say this is to over-simplify matters, but, if I am not too far off the mark, then the task of finding ways of overcoming the difficulty will certainly become less arduous. We can then consider the problem on a practical level, free from the complications which consideration in a wider context would surely entail.

14. As often mentioned, the conclusion of an underground test ban treaty, as well as the form and content of its verification provision, will depend ultimately on the political decisions of the Soviet Union and the United States. To my mind, those decisions will have to be reached in the nature of political gestures of good will and concessions to peace. It is precisely because of that that we should do everything that is likely to facilitate the reaching of such decisions and at the same time eschew everything that could possibly contribute to a further hardening of attitudes, which is not conducive to reaching these decisions.

15. To that end, I wonder whether it would not be advisable in the first place to clear the air politically by starting off from the political premise that States adhering to a treaty banning underground nuclear-weapon tests will in fact refrain from conducting such tests. It is here worth recalling that the three-year nuclear test moratorium, to September 1961, was indeed observed by all concerned. Such an approach would impart to verification -- whose need in one form or another nobody seems to question -- the unmistakably positive purpose and function of confirming confidence and, at the same time, would divest it of any semblances of the negative purpose and function of disproving suspicion. That might well serve the double purpose of making the political decisions I have mentioned easier to arrive at, and of opening up wider, more meaningful possibilities for efforts to bridge the verification requirement gap.

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16. Looking at the problem from another pragmatic angle, I have sometimes wondered whether some kind of inbuilt flexibility in relation to the verification arrangements would not be more conducive to the early conclusion of an underground test ban treaty, without however affecting its stability. The main object of such flexibility would be to provide a form of gestation period, and not to make control weak or ineffective. But it would also meet a certain practical need, namely, that of up-dating the verification arrangements, whenever deemed required, in the light of experience; further improvements in seismic and, perhaps, other long-range detection and identification capabilities; changes in the political climate, and so on. That it may not be possible or desirable to devise a verification system for all time becomes apparent when one compares the elaborate control plans for a comprehensive test ban treaty that were considered during the 1958-1961 talks with their more streamlined derivatives that were examined during the 1962-1963 negotiations. Thus, while the verification arrangements agreed upon and embodied in the treaty may be appropriate at the time of its conclusion, they may no longer be so in, say, the fifth year of the treaty. On the other hand, the treaty itself is to be of unlimited duration, and necessarily so.

17. Of course, changes considered necessary could be introduced under the amendments clause, but its involved procedure, appropriate in relation to other treaty provisions may not be thought appropriate in relation to the verification provision. The desirability and advisability might therefore be examined of inserting in the treaty a provision, independent of the amendments procedure, specifically for the purpose of enabling parties, after a specified period of time, to review the treaty's verification provisions in the light of experience and other pertinent considerations and to effect such modifications to those provisions as they may decide upon. Theoretically, this would mean that the treaty's control formula, whatever its nature and content, would be open at both ends -- at least during the initial period -- but if present trends are any indication, its evolution in practice cannot but be in the direction of a more scientific, simplified and streamlined system.

18. Any serious contemplation of the comprehensive test ban verification question inevitably brings to mind the requirements of a future international regime for peaceful nuclear explosions. As we know, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of

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Nuclear Weapons (ENDC/226*) envisages appropriate international observation and appropriate international procedures in connexion with the provision of the benefits of such explosions. Of course, under that Treaty these arrangements will not apply to peaceful nuclear explosions carried out in the territories of the nuclear-weapon States. That is only to be expected because, among other factors, the comprehensive test ban effect of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does not apply to the nuclear-weapon Powers. But when, with the conclusion of an underground test ban treaty, those Powers too come under a universal comprehensive test ban regime, the need will arise for arrangements which are drawn up along similar lines but which are appropriate to the subject matter of the treaty. These arrangements, to be laid down in a separate international agreement regulating the conduct of peaceful nuclear explosions, will be different from those envisaged in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to the extent that the subject matters of the two treaties will be different.

19. Thus, while the international arrangements envisaged in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will have to be so formulated as to reinforce the non-proliferation regime, those accompanying an underground test ban treaty will have to be so formulated as to reinforce the comprehensive test ban regime. And, since peaceful nuclear explosive devices are indistinguishable from nuclear weapons and the development work on both is identical, some military spin-off will presumably result from peaceful nuclear explosions, particularly from those carried out by way of testing new and better models of peaceful nuclear explosive devices. Therefore, it seems that this problem too will have to be taken care of in the separate international agreement regulating the conduct of peaceful nuclear explosions. Giving inclusive and forward thought as to how this might best be done might enable us to see the entire picture more clearly, and my delegation would therefore welcome views in that connexion, particularly from the nuclear-weapon Powers.

20. I am very sorry to have dwelt so long on this subject. I have done so only because of the great importance and urgency which my delegation attaches to the achievement of a comprehensive test ban. Before leaving the subject, I must once again make it very clear that the tentative thoughts I have offered, for what they are worth, are not and do not pretend to be proposals.

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21. Permit me now to turn to another important measure in the nuclear field. It has all along been my delegation's policy to support all proposals which in our judgement could result in effective measures leading progressively to nuclear disarmament. Consistent with this policy, we have urged in the past that high-priority consideration be given to the cut-off and transfer proposals in conjunction with the proposal for the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the reduction and subsequent elimination of nuclear stockpiles, since we believe that all those measures form a logical sequence of decisive steps towards nuclear disarmament. Now that bilateral talks on the limitation and reduction of strategic arms appear to be in sight, we feel even more strongly that our Committee should begin serious discussions of these proposals without further loss of time.

22. In this connexion we have studied with care the statement made by the representative of the United States on 8 April in which he made an important new proposal for International Atomic Energy Agency verification of a cut-off agreement (ENDC/PV.401, paras. 7 and 8). We have also noted that the United Kingdom has taken a similar position (ENDC/PV.404, para. 18). In stating, on 10 October 1967, our views on the basic requirements of a non-proliferation treaty, my delegation observed that since that treaty was avowedly a lead towards steps in the process of nuclear disarmament, one of its essential elements should be the application of international controls on all nuclear activities of all countries (ENDC/PV.337, para. 22). We therefore welcome the revised proposal as a step in the right direction.

23. I should like to conclude my statement with a few brief comments on the question of preventing an arms race on the sea-bed. Although in nature a preventive measure, as its title suggests, an agreement on this question would, we believe, significantly contain the armaments problem by excluding a vast area of the earth from the arms race. It could even have an arms-control effect if it resulted in the abandonment of research and development work on new mass destruction weapons systems custom-made for sea-bed installation and launching. Therefore, though belonging more to the future than to the present, its significance for international peace and security could be both profound and far-reaching.

24. It is against that background that my delegation welcomes the high priority given to this item in the messages of Chairman Kosygin (ENDC/238) and President Nixon (ENDC/239*), and particularly the presentation by the Soviet delegation on the opening day of the current session of a complete draft treaty text on the total demilitarization of the sea-bed (ENDC/240).

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25. As several previous speakers have pointed out, the three main questions requiring decision concern the scope of the prohibition, the extent of the area to be covered by the prohibition and the nature of the verification system. Many delegations have expressed interesting views on those questions and we are studying them carefully. Tentatively, my delegation feels that the provisions of the projected treaty regarding each of these issues should be such as would ensure, firstly, the effective prevention of an arms race on the sea-bed; secondly, the exclusively peaceful utilization of the largest possible area of the sea-bed in accordance with the accepted principles of international law regarding such utilization; and, finally, the security of all coastal States equally, whether nuclear or non-nuclear, large or small.

26. My Government is carefully studying the Soviet draft in conjunction with the lucid and persuasive explanations of its main provisions given by the representative of the Soviet Union at our meeting on 3 April (ENDC/PV.400, paras. 2-36), and also in the light of the many interesting comments made by several other delegations. I hope to be able to offer at a later meeting detailed comments on this subject as well as some observations on the other important subjects which I have not been able to touch upon in this statement.

The Conference decided to issue the following communiqué:

"The Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament today held its 408th plenary meeting in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador I.F. Porter, representative of the United Kingdom.

"The Conference observed one minute's silence in honour of the memory of the late President of India, Dr. Zakir Husain.

"A statement was made by the representative of Burma.

"The next meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 8 May 1969, at 10.30 a.m."

The meeting rose at 11.5 a.m.